

ENQUIRY

*A Journal of Independent
Radical Thought*

CHICAGO'S THIRD PARTY EXPERIMENT

**The Background of the
American Commonwealth Party**

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CHICAGO'S THIRD PARTY EXPERIMENT

The municipal elections to be held in February, 1943, presented Chicago Socialists with a difficult problem. Because of the ballot laws which make it impossible for other than majority parties to contest the mayoralty elections, they had had to content themselves with futile write-in campaigns for a number of years. And with ward elections for aldermanic positions in City Council running concurrently with mayoralty elections but on a nominally independent (i.e., non-party) basis, Socialists were left in difficult straits with no strongly organized centers of strength in neighborhoods or wards.

In November of 1942 the Socialist Party decided to do other than the traditional "educational" campaign job it would ordinarily attempt. Plans were laid to experiment with an independent campaign run on a well-organized precinct basis in an especially selected ward with a Socialist candidate. All the resources of the Party and its contacts throughout Chicago were to be mobilized within this ward. After thorough discussion and study, the ward selection was made. By sheer luck, Maynard Krueger, the most competent candidate, lived in the ward best adapted for such a campaign.

Chicago's Sixth Ward begins just four blocks south of the University of Chicago. Twenty-five of its ninety-four precincts are composed of Negro voters. The white section has some upper middle class elements, but is primarily populated by small businessmen, workers in Chicago steel mills and other industries to the south and west of the ward, and white-collar workers. It has a high rate of juvenile delinquency and truancy. Its schools are average for Chicago, which means they are bad. The most pressing local problem is the housing question. Multitudinous rooming houses give it one of

the highest tenancy-changing ratios in the city. Not only are housing standards declining, and more and more cheap rooming houses and housekeeping apartments taking over what were once family-type residences, but the whole question of Negro housing and "restrictive covenants" is acute. "Restrictive covenants" are agreements among real estate corporations and organizations forbidding the entrance of Negro or Japanese residents into certain areas. Several professional surveys have been made of this region, and experts agree that unless housing and other problems are met, much of the ward, now near slum, will soon degenerate into slums.

To further Krueger's candidacy, an Independent Committee was established composed of both Socialist Party members and non-members. Willard Townsend, International President of the Transport Service Employees Union, CIO, and this writer were co-chairmen of the committee. The actual work of the campaign began the Monday following Christmas with petitioners beginning the work of securing a ballot spot. During the first week in January an excellent ward office was established at the "border line" between covenant and non-covenant areas, and a full-time campaign organizer was hired. The petition job, soon completed, stood the test of an old-party challenge.

PRECINCT ORGANIZATION

The campaign was well under way by mid-January. The heart of the campaign was in precinct organization, something unusual for left-wing politics. Everything else centered around this. The job of a precinct captain was to make at least two complete and major canvasses of every registered voter in his ward, using the official poll lists of the Election Commission. Each canvas was to tabulate the voting preferences of all voters in a precinct. (There are approximately three hundred voters per precinct.) Special attention was given to the undecided voter to win his vote, whereas little time was wasted on voters definitely opposed to us. Efforts were made to involve the stalwart Krueger supporters we "discovered" into active campaign participation, and a surprising number of precinct captains and workers were recruited from ward residents with whom we had had no previous contact.

All workers carried with them quantities of an attractively printed little campaign card. On one side this brief card carried the succinct platform of the campaign, which attacked the Kelly administration for its connections with crime and vice syndicates, its corruption of the civil service, the inefficiency and dishonesty with which the school system was administered. Special emphasis was placed upon "restrictive covenants" and the need for an adequate housing program, as well as other aspects of racial discrimination. However mild the brief and terse statement may sound to "political-

ized" individuals, it proved to be a small dose of dynamite when broadsided again and again throughout the ward, and when followed up with equally clear statements as to our position on city government, public ownership of transportation, the school system, racial justice, and public housing.

By election day our organization had captained about seventy-five of the ninety-four precincts. Of these, practically all of the Negro precincts were manned by ward residents. Ten of the fifty white precincts were manned by Party members and previously-existent Party contacts, all from outside the ward. (We had but six party members living in the ward, and while all had responsible campaign jobs, none were precinct captains.) Approximately twenty-five of the captains were ward residents "acquired" during the campaign, while another fifteen were University of Chicago students. Thus most of the real work of the campaign was done by new people having their first contact with Socialists.

In the Negro precincts we had anywhere from two to five precinct captains and workers functioning in each precinct. The Negro Republicans, as we discovered during the petition work, had separated from their fellow Republicans on the "white" side of Cottage Grove Avenue, and had then split into three general groupings among themselves. This political situation among the Negro politicians was both helpful and risky. We had no desire to bring fraternity between the quarreling colored Republican factions if that meant rebuilding the Republican organization. Nor did we wish to have official support from them. Most of all, we did not want to be used by these local politicians as vehicles to political power or patronage. In meeting with two of these factions Krueger made several pointblank rejections of endorsement and clearly and specifically stated that he would have nothing to do with paying campaign workers or with post-campaign patronage if elected. Yet these politicians were most anxious to support us. They had no candidate of their own, either colored or white. Moreover, if they were to maintain their position of political leadership, they dared not buck the popular support for Krueger throughout the ranks of the colored voters.

Thus we received the working support, if not the official endorsement, of these two factions. The third Negro faction was composed of a number of the best elements in the community, many of them ready to retire in disgust from politics. Our campaign came like a breath of fresh air, and this group gave us full and unselfish cooperation. Added to them were a number of local Negro people, previously inactive politically, whom we attracted during the campaign, and several young Negroes active in inter-racial work. These people made up the precinct captains and workers for most of the twenty-five precincts west of Cottage Grove. The fact that dissident

Republican workers (plus a number of Democratic captains in the last weeks of the campaign) were also working for Krueger was incidental. We knew that many of these elements could not be trusted, and that in post-campaign work we would probably be fighting, not working together. Therefore in all situations in which we had support, willy-nilly, from former machine figures in the old ward political organizations, we relied not on these elements but on our own organization. (We met the same problem in one "corner" of the white section in similar fashion.)

Precinct captains' meetings were held at ward headquarters each week. At these meetings the candidate and the committee discussed with precinct captains the problems of the campaign. Special attention was devoted to questions of the captains—questions they had been asked while canvassing. In this process these people were politically educated in a real life situation—were given concrete answers to the problems with which they had daily contact. Naturally attention was also given to organizational problems, techniques of canvassing etc. A fine "esprit de corps" was developed among these co-workers, and a real inter-racial fellowship developed. This was encouraged by countless informal meetings, get-togethers, and small parties held continually at the office, often following a work-session.

The work of the precinct captains during the days prior to Election Day was fourfold: (1) General canvasses, the getting and tabulating of voter-reaction in each precinct, and the distribution of platforms and other literature; (2) arranging for small precinct meetings in homes, attended by sympathizers and supporters from within the precinct, presided over by the precinct captain and visited for brief intervals by "teams" of the candidate and other members of the campaign committee. Additional precinct captains and workers were recruited at the sixty-odd neighborhood meetings of this nature held during late January and all through February; (3) helping promote the few regional and ward-wide meetings, rallies, and parties held during the last three weeks of the campaign; (4) promoting the radio broadcasts, around which much of the canvassing centered.

CAMPAIGN—AND DEFEAT

The campaign settled down early to a fight between Maynard Krueger, whose platform biography stated that he had been Socialist candidate for Vice-President in 1940 and was running as an Independent, and Patrick Sheridan Smith, the regular Republican candidate. Smith was an old-time local Republican politico and had once been City Treasurer during the Big Bill Thompson heyday. As one small part of a bi-partisan deal between the Republicans and Democrats, there was no regular Democratic candidate running in our ward. (This deal, incidentally, extends not only throughout the entire state of Illinois but has ramifications even in the United States Senate, Kelly-Nash and the Tribune-Brooks-Green crowd make only token

battles.) There were two minor candidates, both running without benefit of platform. An independent Democrat eventually dropped out and endorsed Smith. An independent Republican, sore at Smith for personal reasons, made an intensive personal house-to-house campaign and received a goodly number of votes with his frank campaign plea: "Help me get a large vote and I'll get a City Hall job."

The introduction into this ward of a campaign platform of any sort, of a campaign on issues conducted on principled lines, was a new note. Krueger's four radio speeches were another new note, attracting not only good listening audiences in the ward but throughout the city. (During these broadcasts a Smith sound truck toured the Negro section and with full volume tried to counteract the radio speeches.) The radio afforded a good medium through which we elaborated on the platform and principles of the campaign, challenged the old party politicians, rallied city-wide financial support, pointed out fuller Socialist answers, and recruited more campaign workers from within the ward.

On the strength of his platform and radio utterances on the schools question, the important Citizens School Committee endorsed Krueger. The "liberal" Marshall Field publication, *The Chicago Sun*, completely ignored the Sixth Ward, though its editorial writers have been verbose on three of our major campaign points—racial justice, public housing, and public ownership of Chicago's ungodly transit system. Contrariwise, the conservative Frank Knox journal, *The Chicago Daily News*, endorsed the campaign. At all times, however, our emphasis was on precinct work. We did not waste time in compiling any lists of sponsors.

From Sunday morning till Tuesday morning, February 23, both campaign machines went into high gear. *The Chicago Times* had conceded that of all the incumbent (we called them "sitting") Republican alderman, only Smith might be defeated. The question of victory and defeat hinged upon the forty-eight hour period before election, and the activities of the two groups on Election Day.

Smith had been quiet during most of the campaign, holding his fire till the end. On Saturday night, Sunday, and Monday he broadsided the white community with a vicious four-page paper, in which practically every sentence denounced Krueger's position on the race question. Included were long, inflammatory resolutions passed by all five of the local property-owners associations condemning our stand on restrictive covenants. The general thesis was that if Krueger won, the day following would find Negroes invading the white area en masse. While we had not been caught napping, we frankly were not prepared for the clever viciousness of the Smith attack, nor of the immensity of it. Our own answering document, previously prepared, contained endorsements from several of the leading white ministers. (All but one of the ministers in the *entire* ward supported

the campaign, some actively.) But our document was very weak compared to the Smith broadside. The Monday night radio broadcast made a valiant attempt to point out the mutual harm to all in racial discrimination, particularly in the field of housing, and clearly demonstrated the folly of trying to avoid housing deterioration through restrictive covenants which benefited only absentee landlords. However, the damage had been done by the race-hatred line, although it was not until the ballots were counted that we realized its full effect.

Krueger could probably have been elected had we followed the advice of the old-line Negro politicians themselves and soft-pedaled the race question in the eastern half of the ward. There is also no doubt that by losing on the issue as he did, probably no white man now has higher respect from the rank-and-file Negro voter throughout the South Side than Maynard Krueger.

Yet Election Day itself tells the real story. Ninety per cent of the preparatory work is lost in most wards unless there is careful organization then. We had trained about one hundred students from the University of Chicago as poll watchers in the white precincts, which generally left the precinct captains free of this particular responsibility. The Negro precincts took care of their own poll-watching.

The job of the precinct captain on Election Day is a big one. He particularly has to try to keep careful check that the "sure" voters have all voted—has to utilize various measures to get these sure voters to the polls if by mid-afternoon they haven't arrived. Thus a precinct captain who knows his neighborhood, who has careful records of who is certain to vote the "right" ticket, and who has the machinery and resources to "get out the vote"—that captain will carry his precinct in a close campaign. Here we were at a big disadvantage in the white precincts where popular opinion was swinging the other way in response to the Smith race-hate broadsides.

While we had almost all our precincts manned in at least fair fashion, we did not have the cars, runners, and visitors to do the needed door bell ringing on Election Day itself. People who had been mildly pro-Krueger in many cases yielded before pressure, and just stayed home, and in most instances we did not have the manpower resources to rout out these latent Krueger voters. In many of the white precincts we were unable to distribute sample ballots, properly marked, in front of the polling places, although Smith was always represented outside these places. This also had a psychological effect on wavering voters.

On the final tally we carried sixteen out of the twenty-five Negro precincts. There were two reasons why we failed to carry some individual precincts, though we carried the overall Negro community. One reason is found in the large sums of money Smith spent on Election Day hiring campaign "workers." In one precinct where we were particularly well-organized he spent over two hundred dollars. A similar pattern was followed throughout the ward,

particularly in the Negro sections. Rumors were started during the last hours of "We've finally found out who this man Krueger is—he's the man who keeps Negroes out of the University of Chicago." This complete fabrication was believed by many Negroes. Their gullibility was understandable. They have had long experience with white "friends" who forgot that friendship the day after election.

The other reason was not anticipated and was harder to fight. Some of the Negroes, whom we thought we could count on the most, sold out to Smith at the last minute. Since then some of our other Negro people told us that they could have informed us in advance who would weaken under pressure, but that not until they saw us go down fighting on principled issues did they (the Negroes closest to us) feel they could trust us to the extent of pointing out the "fakes" in their own race. This will not happen again in the South Side, but it presents a real problem which third party enthusiasts must face and cope with if they are to reach into the "grass roots" of any Negro community with a program and organization led primarily by whites.

The final tally was a disappointment to many, though not on the whole indicative of the campaign and the organization. The vote was 3,973 for Krueger to Smith's 10,808.

PRINCIPLED POLITICS AND ELECTORAL EFFICIENCY

One hesitates to generalize overmuch from the experience of the campaign, but some observations can be made. (1) People do respond favorably to progressive-socialist campaigns when these campaigns are organizationally efficient. The campaign may be "doomed to defeat" from the beginning, but if it is organized efficiently and intelligently at the precinct and ward level it will receive a high degree of support from many voters. This is another way of saying that for good or ill the average American voter casts his ballot only for tickets with a well-functioning "machine." (2) It is possible through a combination of ordinary honesty, well-functioning organization, and vigorous populist-socialist principles to rally many of the latently independent voters to active participation in campaigns of this nature, and to end the political apathy of many. (3) The functioning of old party machines is far from flawless. Hard-working volunteers, convinced of the validity of their principles and the integrity of their candidates, will do a better job of precinct and ward work than paid political hacks. When Socialists, radicals, and progressives can place more volunteers in the field than the old parties can place hired workers, then they will get the votes of that ward, and no sooner—lofty political ideals notwithstanding. (4) There is no necessary contradiction between principle and organization.

That these observations are at least partially germane is indicated by post-campaign developments, the most important of which has been the birth of the American Commonwealth Party, formed as part of

local Socialist plans to continue the Sixth Ward beginnings. In recent months a series of planning and discussion meetings have been held between the Socialists, a number of militant trade unionists, some good liberals, and others, all either active in the Sixth Ward campaign or acquainted with what happened there. The American Commonwealth Party has come out of these meetings, beginning with the progressive elements from the South Side. All of its Executive Committee have had previous experience in left-wing political action, five of the nine are members of the Socialist Party, and six of the nine have responsible local trade union positions. Although maintaining the basic premises of the Sixth Ward campaign, Commonwealth has a broader perspective, a more clearly defined status, and from the beginning has had better financial and personnel backing.

The Socialists, in continuing this type of political action, have felt that the work of the Socialist Party, *per se*, in the *electoral* field has generally been ineptly handled, and about it has accumulated a psychosis of futility which frustrates and will probably continue to frustrate the *electoral* work of the Party. Moreover, the demise of the New Deal now releases many forces, particularly among trade unionists, which will be looking for a better and more vigorous political home.

In the fall of 1944 the organization will try its mettle in the 2nd Congressional District of Illinois, an area which includes the Sixth Ward, and contains about 650 precincts. This area is also nearly continuous with electoral districts which will elect at the same time two state senators and two state representatives, as well as a Washington-bound congressman.

As it is now constituted, the American Commonwealth Party will intelligently seek to avoid the mistakes made by similiar manifestations in the past. It looks forward to expanding its program and its own or similiar organizations, and has already been in contact with like-minded but as yet unofficial groupings in St. Louis, Flint, Detroit, Indiana, and elsewhere in Chicagoland.

The opening paragraph of a manifesto just issued runs as follows:

The people of the world are the victims of ever more body-and-soul-destroying wars and depressions. They did not want this second world war, but the struggle against it was lost from the beginning. It was lost because the people, hoping against hope, tried to prevent it without attempting to get rid of the conditions which led, unmercifully and unavoidably, to the terror of war and to the aftermath of new injustices, sufferings, and conflicts. This war has not yet ended, and already the people of the world are filled with fears of future failures and catastrophes, of future depressions, and of new and even bloodier wars.

.....When faced with the tasks of social reconstruction in this country and in the world (the major parties) cannot be expected to succeed because they are caught by their very nature.... These parties are the instruments of powerful economic interest groups devoted to the conservation of the old catastrophic order of things.... (They are) the tools of giant corporations and

monopolistic big business.... Democracy requires better instruments of action.... For those who earn their keep by doing the necessary work of the world, unity is not to be found in the temporary alliances and compromises of political log-rolling within the corrupt old parties and within any cleaner new parties of the old type. That essential unity of useful people is to be achieved rather in a political movement which rallies men and women of all occupations and in all races around an over-all program of social reconstruction, a program that goes beyond the more and more futile attempts to patch up and harmonize the conflicting immediate interests of diverse groups."

This organization begins with a good base of supporters, particularly in the Sixth Ward, but also throughout the District where the Sixth Ward germ has been filtering. This is especially true of the Negro community. There has been little formal consultation of these mass supporters by the Commonwealth leadership to date, and they are perhaps open to censure at this point. It is true however, that the Commonwealth Party will not be officially launched until a nominating and organizational convention is held in the early spring.

Left-wingers have always been justly skeptical of mass socialist and populist movements. Yet for the independent left to take an ostrich policy toward these developments would be a tragic mistake. (Even more tragic would be to take a hostile and purist attitude. These new people's movements will be both latently and actually pitted against the rising tide of reaction and totalitarianism.) A hands-off policy will leave the growing movement prey to opportunist liberals, crackpots and money-bugs, homeless new dealers, Communists, reactionaries of the old school, and home-grown fascists; it will isolate us from the best elements within the industrial working class, to say nothing of the lower middle class and the farmers. Our purely theoretical and academic nature will be unduly accentuated and misshaped. This separation will eliminate our major educational opportunities and will make it virtually impossible to recruit new and fresh elements. The recurrence of the mistakes of its predecessors can conceivably be prevented in a developing third party only if the left accepts a responsible theoretical and educational role within the larger group. And perhaps most important of all, the emergence of a powerful and independent people's force (whether or not it is successful) can do much toward ending the vitiating psychosis of futility which has demoralized everything left of center in this country.

ROBERT MARSHALL.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE ONCE-BORN

Although he did not originally make the distinction between the once-born and the twice-born, William James used it to some advantage in his analysis of religion. The once-born deny sin, or ignore it, and they require a religion of healthy-mindedness, like Christian Science or Unitarianism. The twice-born, on the other hand, require a religion which takes account of evil; the world is to them a "double-storied mystery."

If James was personally convinced of the existence of evil, pragmatism on the whole, however, appears to have striven to ignore it. It is one of the oddities of the American spirit that our scientific development, and our scientific philosophy, should appear to be the final secularization of unitarian Protestantism, and to have carried over from it its euphoric character. It is as if our psychology and our philosophy had been deliberately dedicated to proving by empirical means the unitarian belief in the sinlessness of man and to providing the theoretical justification for the final transformation of the church into a wholesome community. Of course, the question of sin soon dropped out. Yet the one-sidedness of the unitarian attitude has remained, and there is no other country in which naturalism and the method of science have been so esteemed, at the same time that the recalcitrant facts of personal, economic, and political life have been so systematically ignored.

It is this one-sidedness of attitude that makes the social philosophy of John Dewey so vulnerable to the recent attacks of pessimism. It would be a mistake to write off current doubt as to the scientific management of social affairs as so much metaphysical nonsense, although a good deal of it is. The theories of ideology and rationalization, of the oligarchical development of organization and the inevitability of class rule as advanced by Mannheim, Freud, Michels, Mosca, and now being taken seriously, with various effects, in progressive circles, raise the old problem of recalcitrance versus potentiality to a new and empirical level. At any rate, Dewey's political philosophy has never seriously taken them into account and has, as a result, developed a simple and hortatory approach.

On the positive side, its characteristic optimism is a conviction that the method of science not only should but can be introduced into political affairs, the introduction to take place via the growth of culture patterns of scientific objectivity in the community at large. The truly democratic state will be a kind of supreme arbitration board with special economic, political, and social interests held in check

by an ingrained concern for the satisfaction of all interests in dispute. Decisions will be conceived by the state and accepted by the public as experimental, so that the need to institute concrete programs by coercion will disappear, and the state as a system of power relations will indeed wither away.

This vision, in the face of the discouraging actuality, is supported by another: that the human personality is potential and can learn to adopt the scientific attitude in social matters. On the negative side, the optimism amounts to a refusal to admit a social reality, however limited, which is not only permanent but recalcitrant to the morality of science. It denies what the theories of recalcitrance assert in various ways: that the requirements of societal organization have permanent, and limiting, consequences. The net result is a social philosophy which meets the problems of recalcitrance by positing an ideal society in which recalcitrance will have been eliminated; and the unique problem of progressive politics—how to achieve a method both effective and moral in a word of sharply divergent interests, of power struggles and mass manipulation—is absorbed in the projection of another and better world. The democratic community will be the final triumph over evil, an altogether unambiguous paradise.

THE GREAT COMMUNITY

At its best, Dewey's optimism attains the status of a methodology. It is attached to a naturalism which is frankly normative and which has worked hypothetically, with all the ethical enthusiasm of a great discovery, to achieve a concrete synthesis of experience. It has led him to uncover actual continuities of behavior, and most successfully, to trace the controls upon ordinary activity which have resulted in that specialized behavior we call scientific method. Optimism was from the first intrinsic to his attempt to show that the philosophic trinity and stock in trade—the true, the good, and the beautiful—was implicit in ordinary experience. But it is his ethics—and his political philosophy—which represents that synthesis most wholly, and which is for that reason most apt to reveal its inadequacies.

If Dewey has treated the arts and sciences as elaborations of ordinary behavior, his political philosophy reverses that procedure by transferring the scientific method into politics. This reversal consists not so much in the proposal that social problems be solved by controlled inquiry as that society become a "Great Community" guided by the cooperative morality of science. The cogency of his proposal obviously depends upon a radical synthesis of the two types of behavior and upon the virtual identity in some respects between the logic of science and the structure of society.

Dewey's theory of the state tries to locate that identity and to bridge at the same time the logical gap between the method of science and secular politics. The difficulty in transferring the method

of science, which depends upon common consent to the goal of truth and the canons of evidence, into social areas characterized by conflict has certainly not escaped Dewey. Yet, despite his statements that the method of science is limited in its applicability by the absence of such common consent in the larger world, he has tried to link science and society by endowing the state with an intrinsically scientific function. The state becomes a natural growth originating out of a *common* interest in adjusting the public consequences of individual action. "The lasting, extensive and serious consequences of associated activity bring into existence a public. In itself it is unorganized and formless. By means of officials and their special powers it becomes a state. A public articulated and operating through representative officers is the state" Unfortunately, as Dewey is quick to point out, the common concern is perverted by the intrusion of class and other interests. As a genetic explanation, Dewey's theory of the state is, of course, altogether cogent. Every revolutionary group, which looks to public chaos for the main chance, accepts it implicitly. Order of some kind, of any kind, is one of the necessities of social life; the more ramified the public, all-over consequences of individual action, the more urgent the formal, duly constituted authority becomes.

Dewey's theory is philosophically interesting as an attempt to establish the genetic reality, rooted in common interest, as primary, viewing with ethical nicety the actual behavior of men as a kind of perversion of original function. From a political point of view, however, it is disarming when it leads to an opinion like the following: "The strife of interests, parties and factions is especially harmful since the problem is a common human one, the ways in which it is dealt with and their results affecting all alike." Democracy, then, as the social counterpart of the method of science, ought to be a non-factional affair; for the classless society of the Marxists, Dewey has substituted the "Great Community" infused with the *Geist* of a common democratic enterprise and scientific attitude.

Yet it may reasonably be asked whether, under any circumstances, the common human problem can ever be relied upon to motivate the actions of the political man. No training, no social institution, can possibly guarantee a consistent objectivity and concern for the common welfare; ¹ and certainly the question of when and where to undertake factional struggle cannot be decided by the general logic of problem-solving but only by an appraisal of the social situation. This means, after witnessing the growth of totalitarianism and granting extra-scientific aims to be an abiding factor in society, that instru-

1. "Science: Method and Morality" in the first issue of *Enquiry* tried to show, among other things, that the organizational demands of politics militate against a scientific objectivity, and that the choice between it and other values grows out of the materials at hand and not out of a perverted mentality.

ments of opposition and struggle must remain the ultimate safeguards and have to be accepted as permanent elements of democracy.

In his own way Dewey relies on spontaneity: the "Great Community" will evolve its own political forms which will presumably nurture only a high objectivity and devotion to democracy. From a theoretical point of view, the danger in such an attitude is that it is bound to breed inattention to actual social institutions—to political parties, economic organizations, governmental structures—as merely transitory and expressive only of a pre-scientific age of human conduct. The continuity that lies under social change becomes limited to the good; the evil will not live after. No attempt to show that some of the conditions of modern life, irrespective of economic organization, give rise quite naturally to practices hostile to democracy can then be regarded as legitimate: there is no political or social fact which is not ultimately transformable by the "Great Community."

HUMAN NATURE AS POTENTIAL

Dewey's ground for refusing to acquiesce to any human and social reality which is more than transitory and which is also, from the point of view of the method of science, ethically recalcitrant, lies in his iteration of the potentiality of the human personality. And because he reduces social institutions, like all those who root social concepts in individual psychology, to the derivative status of personality expression—"...we have to learn to think of (institutions) as expressions, projections, and extensions of habitually dominant personal attitudes"—his optimism extends automatically to the perfectability of society. As a result, what started out to be a refutation of the notion that there are *a priori* limits to human endeavor has come very close to denying, on the basis of a faith in potentiality, that any limits exist at all. So far as politics is concerned, his belief in potentiality has functioned as a kind of metaphysical base, metaphysical in the deprecatory sense because it has been used to substitute for the analysis of actual behavior.

By its very nature, a faith in potentiality cannot accept *general* conclusions about behaviour which are not also ethically innocuous. It sees the facts of personal and social life as signifying nothing about man and his institutions except that they are in a pre-scientific age. Such a faith is, of course, logically invulnerable; no fact in the world can undermine it, for it regards all conclusions about human and social behavior as capable of being ultimately set aside by the exercise of man's good will. Anything approaching a science of society or of human behavior above the bare biological level appears to be automatically outruled: "What is generic and the same everywhere is at best the organic structure of man, his biological make-up."

At any rate, the unqualified conviction of potentiality has led Dewey to an inverted and systematic reductionism. He has always tended to treat assertions about human and social behavior which

threatened to imply recalcitrance as if they were necessarily statements about an *a priori* and absolute personality.² Consequently Dewey has never taken seriously whole areas of thought—Marxism or Freudian psychology, for example, or the contributions of modern sociology—being content with criticizing them on a formal level, and their insights remain essentially alien to the naturalist attitude.

The fact that Dewey has interpreted the question of permanent recalcitrance as exclusively a question about human nature and not as a question about the limits of social institutions is a reflection of the fundamentally psychological bias which pervades pragmatism. This bias has led to a concreteness which is misplaced at times or irrelevant, giving Dewey's political writings only a specious cogency. For example, his discussion in *Freedom and Culture* of the fallacy of hypostatizing a "love of power" as a controlling motive in political behavior was as usual a model of analysis. Yet it would have been far more pertinent if it had been based on the recognition that the widespread postulation of a power-instinct points to a permanent problem in social control. Power is a prime tool of political reconstruction, and any analysis which fails to recognize either its necessity or its unfortunate consequences divorces itself from the elementary facts of political experience.

It is true, of course, that it is Dewey's earlier writings which reflect the psychological bias most strongly. His recognition, comparatively recent, that economic reorganization is necessary has been accompanied by a closer attention to the actualities of society. He has injected also something of an anthropological note attuned, however, strictly to the cultural relativity school, which has functioned primarily as an alternative formulation for the conviction, originally gained via psychology, of the potentiality of the individual. In his own way, Dewey has subscribed to the usual *non sequitur* of cultural relativism: that because many different cultures are known to exist, there are no limits at all to the kind of society that can be built.

It is paradoxical from the point of view of Dewey's recognition of the interaction of culture and personality that he should rely so heavily on the viability of the scientific ideal. It is certainly not evident that it can be maintained very far from its center and original source: the set of practices that constitute institutionalized inquiry. Dewey once remarked somewhere that doubt about the possibility of universal objectivity was a form of intellectual snobbery; if one man could be scientific, so could any other. But the question

2. The recent series in *Partisan Review*, "The New Failure of Nerve," exhibited the same reductionist tendency. Its identification of pessimism with metaphysics constituted in effect a denial that any real and pressing problems exist toward which pessimism might be regarded as an appropriate attitude.

of individual virtue is not involved, and it is misleading to bring it in. The question that is involved is whether we can depend on day-to-day problems to continue to be the crucial source of values and goals. The major import of the theories of recalcitrance lies in their tracing out the transformation of motives under the impact of day-to-day problems; and there is no reason to believe that scientific good will is at all immune to corruption.

It is one of the virtues, however dubious, of Dewey's radical optimism that the "permanent solution" should be seen as still in the future, although I believe he did consider the New Deal "experimental." But the logic of a radical optimism is always dangerous: like William James' once-born it may decide at some particular time that the millenium has arrived and cease to take account of unpalatable reality.

GERTRUDE JAEGER

A NOTE ON POLITICS AND EDUCATION

"*Education through activity*" is an athletic phrase apparently in accord with the healthiest tendencies in modern thought. It stresses the truth that knowledge is more than speculative and that politics is, among other things, a skill and craft to be learned. Yet it has its dubious aspects, for it can provide a convenient meeting ground for both a crude pragmatism and a traditional Marxism, with knowledge conceived as sheer activity by the one and, by the other, as the will to change the world. At this meeting of minds, all the education necessary to sustain democracy is believed to be entirely indigenous to the masses in their class and social struggles, with their interests and needs conceived as sufficient to generate a comprehensive level of understanding. Education as politics becomes merely the collective effort to make fully conscious to ourselves these kinds of needs and interests, which are defined not in terms of the concrete human beings who display them, but as economic and social forces working through the individual. So by appropriating a shopworn idea of consciousness from education and a metaphysical notion of needs from politics, and treating whatever is left as transitory and insignificant, politics and education become merely two aspects of the same whole. The empirical problem of their *mutual inhibitions* disappears.

Political activity and education can be identified, then, only

if a party's program is concomitantly identified with the urgency of mass needs and interests. But a socialist party has not only to succeed in grounding the necessary social influence for the enforcement of its political program. It has also to prepare for the administrative realization of its social ends, for which the bare existence of needs, and the masses with whom they are related, are never sufficient conditions. If we confuse these two aims, only then can we believe that politics is education.

For when politics is conceived as simply mass politics, ultimate socialist goals and their administrative realization become increasingly vague on the ground that blue-prints are impossible; political thought is confined to the mechanics of seizing power. Education is reduced to "speaking to people in their own terms," activity is carried on for the sake of "appealing to the masses." And this in turn permits indiscriminate recruitment on a merely quantitative basis; a recruitment that is not concerned with finding people who can *contribute solutions* to the problems a socialist society provokes. An element of anti-intellectualism suffuses the psychological orientation of the masses, even though it may assume a theoretical disguise. Problems of immediate organization precede and push out from discussion problems of ultimate ends, which tend to be abstract anyway. The growing numbers of the uninitiated and uninformed serve as indispensable prey for desperate theoreticians, who need to carry votes and command support. Activity, blind from the viewpoint of the ends under which it is supposedly subsumed, becomes the focus around which bureaucracy can maintain itself. The clarity of the party becomes sacrificed to the confusion of the masses which it sets out to resolve.

The theoretical objections, then, to the notion that education can be reduced to overt action go hand in hand with a recognition of its chaotic and undemocratic practical consequences. For when action proceeds only upon the vaguest set of aims its consequences are unpredictable, unplanned, and bureaucratic. And ideally, it is just the elimination of these difficulties which, after all, constitute the proper and unique office of the political party. Otherwise everyone might, if it were possible, act for himself. Take, for example, the situation of the Bolsheviks when the population undertook to carry out their slogan of "workers control." Local groups did take over industries; but they soon found that, while they could manage them with a certain crude efficiency on a factory basis, their control soon disintegrated in the face of the necessity for taking into account the effects of that management upon the economic needs of the *whole* nation. And so they provoked a state of affairs upon which democratic intentions could not wait. The national situation was desperate; it was impossible to maintain democratic controls when their exercise

resulted in economic chaos. The Bolsheviks, given their presuppositions, had no other choice but to administer the economy on a bureaucratic basis.

What was lacking was knowledge of a kind about which the Bolsheviks never concerned themselves: knowledge about the administrative requirements of a socialist society. They did not recognize that between the individual and his problem and the socialist goal stood a host of mediating administrative concepts for which social organization offers neither the time nor energy for all to understand. Yet because knowledge is not made secure by immediate collective and individual action, but only by the mediating concepts under which that action takes place, the great problem of politics is to construct the administrative policy, structure, and skills which can act as the bridge between situation and goal, to make administrative procedure operationally relevant to ultimate goals. While the Bolsheviks were never anti-theoretical in their bias, they depended initially too greatly upon immediate action to be sufficient to the task of reconstruction, thereby limiting their main goal to the bare organization of a strong working class movement for the overthrow of capitalism, and its education to a criticism of existing institutions. It was thus possible for them to refer to socialism only in the most glowing terms and as the absolute antithesis of all capitalist evil. The Bolsheviks never prepared the masses for the responsibilities they were later to have to assume.

It would be naive to believe that an awareness of the administrative problem could have been incorporated into the Bolshevik party without any serious changes in its makeup. And it is in this connection that the main reason for prevalent left-wing confusion about politics and education arises in its most flagrant manner. It is due to disregard of this simple methodological procedure: just as when we do not like a set of consequences we must change the assumptions from which they flow, so when we do not like a set of educational practices we must change the political instrument, the party, from which *they* flow, either limiting or expanding interactions one upon the other. For educational differences are really a function of differences in the conception of the kind of party one is trying to build. The role of the party determines what its problems will be, and it is the problem to be solved that determines the organized character of education. We cannot alter the latter without a conjoint reformulation of the politics in which it is sustained. And our seriousness in such an enterprise is measured only by the thoroughness of the break we are willing to undergo.

These difficulties are sometimes thought to be impugned by a peculiar twist on the theme of "solving problems as they come up."

If this were an opportunist policy it might be admissable, but as a considered strategy it both misses the point and prolongs the original error. First of all, there need be no necessary dichotomy between a continual on-going inquiry and a well-defined set of aims. The specification of the conditions under which that is possible is a fruitful undertaking these days, not the complete negation of the problem. But even more important perhaps, there is evidenced a certain laxness to take into theoretical account what has always been the central problem of a revolutionary grouping: the question of discipline. For such a grouping must necessarily consist of people of close and concrete agreement, and when it does not, the danger is either of being torn apart when the particular problem comes up (and hence being ineffective) or else of falling victim to a bureaucratic manipulation of control over policy and program. To leave decisions and differences in a party go to a period of intense pressure from external events would mean that little thought and discussion (a presupposition of democracy) could be given to them in the exigencies of immediate action. And it is just this dilemma which puts those who speak of democratic socialism to the test.

The ultimate question involved in a discussion of politics and education resolves itself into the contradiction between the necessity for a mass party so far as the attainment of power is concerned and the necessity for a select party so far as technical problems of administration are concerned.* Whether we like it or not, problems of administration, of economy and of efficiency, are matters of skill in which only a relatively small number of people are either interested or trained. Yet, the evolving complexity of administration makes, in inverse proportion, mutual understanding between leaders and led (a prerequisite of plenary representation) extremely difficult of attainment. So long as mass effort is conceived as properly directed toward situations with which, due to the complexity of organization, the masses cannot *identify themselves*, either the manipulation of inept masses will continue by skillful administrators or administrative ineptness will lead to chaos and tyranny. If the Bolsheviks had had some administrative mechanism to pull themselves out of economic disorder without endangering democratic controls, it does not seem implausible that Russia might have pursued another course, less spectacular perhaps but more profound.

What sort of a working agency could have accomplished that?

* Of course no party is either **exclusively** mass or elite. For there is always, on the one hand, a natural element of selectivity determined by the party's program, composition, style, etc. And if it be conceded that state and legal power is guaranteed by social power, there is no question but that to be in politics means to have **some** contact with the masses.

Perhaps what is needed is a division of labor, a separation of political task. It may very well be that part of the functions which have traditionally accrued to the radical party will have to devolve upon agencies which are not political at all. There is a strain in the writings of John Dewey (whose unities between action and intelligence are also many times forced) which, though undeveloped, points to this conclusion.

"...the real energy of society is now directed in all non-political matters by specialists who manage things, while politics are carried on with a machinery and ideas formed in the past to deal with quite another sort of situation... It is not necessary that the many should have the knowledge and skill to carry on the needed investigation; what is required is that they have the ability to judge of the bearing of the knowledge supplied by others upon common concerns. Inquiry indeed devolves upon experts... and if at present, people are not educated to the importance of finding experts and of entrusting administration to them, it may be plausibly asserted that the prime obstruction lies in the superstitious belief that there is a public concerned to determine the formation and execution of general social policies."

It may very well be, too, that there is a genuine place for a mass party, but we cannot hope to have it satiate our ultimate aims or our dearest philosophical conceptions. But it is also necessary to be something more than single-minded about any one political form, for the conflict between the elite and the mass is always there, in a wholly natural and unmalicious way, and whether we care to face it or not.

ARTHUR BRODBECK.

THE MORAL CRITIC*

It was in the *Partisan Review* of September-October, 1940, that Mr. Trilling publicly announced his strategy. Discussing T. S. Eliot's *Idea of a Christian Society* in the light of Matthew Arnold's dictum that criticism "must be apt to study and praise elements that for the fulness of spiritual perfection are wanted," he subjected the liberal-socialist ideology to a vigorous and pointed chiding. His subsequent writings might be viewed as a search for those "elements which are wanted," a brilliant and sustained, if sometimes impatient, exploration of the complexities of moral perfection and of the paths thereto.

In fact, and this is our special interest, in that very same article Mr. Trilling incorporated two distinct chidings. He was angry with the Left for having surrendered its traditional moral vision, and at the same time accused it of allowing this vision to blind it to the true

*E. M. Forster, by Lionel Trilling. *New Directions*, 1943. \$1.50.

principles of humanism. It was all done with such noble vehemence as to blur any hint of incompatibility. (It is certain that Mr. Trilling felt none.) Yet, the two tendencies are interesting and important in themselves, and have a larger reference which makes them worthy of attention.

The distinguishing feature of modern radical thought, wrote Mr. Trilling, "is that a consideration of means has taken priority over the consideration of ends—...immediate ends have become more important than ultimate ends...." The noteworthy quality of Eliot, contrasted to Trotsky, is his belief in morality as an end, not simply as a means, as an ever present shaping ideal, not a set of prescribed tactics. Moral, rather than historical, criteria are seen as the measure of action: "...politics is to be judged by what it does for the moral perfection rather than the physical easement of man." The sense of immanent moral revolution—so profoundly developed in the eighteenth century,—the concern with the potentialities of the individual and the race, have lost their vitality. Instead of asking "What shall man become," socialists have concentrated exclusively upon maneuvering for temporary advantages in the contest for influence and power.

"Lenin," wrote Mr. Trilling, "gave us the cue when, at the end of *The State and Revolution*, he told us that we might well postpone the problem of what man is to become until such time as he might become anything he chose. One understands how such a thing gets said; but one understands too that saying it does not make a suspension of choice: it is a choice already made and the making of it was what gave certain people the right to wonder whether the ethics and culture of communism were anything else than the extension of the ethics and culture of the bourgeois business world. For many years the hero of our moral myth was that Worker-and-Peasant who smiled from the covers of *Soviet Russia Today*, simple, industrious, literate—and grateful. Whether or not people like him actually existed is hard to say; one suspects not and hopes not; but he was what his leaders and the radical intellectuals were glad to propagate as a moral ideal; that probably factitious Worker was the moral maximum which the preoccupation with immediate ends could accommodate."

This critique of radicalism partakes of the normal religio-ethical tone so consistently set forth by men like Maritain, Niebuhr, Dawson. It breaks with secularized politics, with politics, as one writer has called it, as an "independent art in an imperfect world," and insists that politics is but a branch of that broad science of ethics which derives from and is orientated towards the Good. In a sweep of revulsion from the interminably sordid conflict of interests it cries for social action whose goals are dictated by the fixed ethical imagination, not the fluid criteria of expediency; whose motivation is disinterested devotion, not interested gain; whose present status reflects, however crookedly, that image which is ideal. Such an appeal cannot help but be effective in these days when an ideal is at best a momentary, individual vision, and the raw stuff of politics is so pervasive and unyielding. It offers a way of penance and justification, all the more attractive for having so few definite programmatic implications; it stimulates the more pragmatic minded to review their deeds in relation to their ends, and revise the one to suit the other. It encourages frank self-analysis and excites the moral faculties—two very good things.

Yet there appears in the same essay another strain of thought, destined to dominate the later writings, which, while not detracting from the fierce probity of the moralist, leads in a direction more agreeable to the work-a-day world. It is seen in the disparagement of radical philosophers who imply that "man, in his quality, in his kind, will be wholly changed by socialism in fine ways that we cannot pre-

dict: man will be good, not as some men have been good, but good in new and unspecified fashions. At the bottom of at least popular Marxism there has always been a kind of disgust with humanity as it is and a perfect faith in humanity as it is to be." It is this simplistic faith in perfectibility which cultivates the domineering arrogance of the self-righteous reformer, and which forgives in advance inhumanity disguised as humanistic zeal. The present is only a transitional (almost illusory) epoch, and living men possess value in a potential and inferential sense, never in their own right and by virtue of their present human qualities. "The ultimate man has become the end for which all temporal men are the means."

The incongruity between the two tendencies is incipient and veiled. Presented in such an eloquent and original fashion, they tend to coerce unified assent through the many truths they both contain. Radical politics has been morally barren, has sacrificed men to means. We do feel disgust with the human quality of any given moment, and carelessly sanction the sacrifice of men to Man. It is only in some of the later reviews and especially in the book on Forster that the divergence and its pertinence to the larger issues becomes evident. And it is the latter of these attitudes which permeates the literary and philosophic judgment.

Mr. Trilling's taste in style will serve as an *entrée*; his 'official' taste, one might add. He is impatient with the modern schools of the novel and points approvingly to the tradition of Dickens and Fielding. (The fact that the modern on whom he wreaks his wrath are always second-stringers, never including a Joyce, Kafka, or Malraux, indicates the grounds for emphasizing the formal nature of these verdicts.) The nineteenth century novel was a form of civilized social intercourse, with a relation between author and reader that was frank and friendly. The casual camaraderie, the good-humored witticism, the clear comic contrivance—all breathed the spirit of tolerant worldliness, "a kind of healthy contentment with human nature;" even satire, with its open avowal of anger, worked within this mood. The novel of modernity, however, reveals quite a different temper. Evil and ugliness are not frontally attacked through the intent of the writer; they are seen as the inevitable product of the characters' transgressions, for which the author disclaims all responsibility. Indeed, the author is no longer human at all, but simply the Eye and Hand which traces the natural logic of character and situation.

This attitude—designated as increasingly sterile—Mr. Trilling sees derived from "liberalism." The liberal state of mind is reformist and humanitarian; a state of mind whose basis is snobbery, self-satisfaction, unimaginativeness. (The religious mind is an aversion to liberalism yet partakes of the same spirit, substituting theological credo for social principle).

The liberal flatters himself upon his intentions, "and prefers not to know that the good will generate its own problems, that the love of humanity has its own vices and the love of truth its own insensibilities." He is paternal and pedagogic, smug in the knowledge of his righteousness, and sure of the adequacy of his program. He revels in the abstract goodness of the masses and in the abstract badness of Reaction; his art merely dramatizes these axiomatic convictions. Human beings are denigrated into terms for his syllogisms which are then dressed up in fictional form. An insidious cruelty is at work, in which all men are expendable in order to make a point.

In contrast to this facile moralism, E. M. Forster's "moral realism" is extolled, for "he is one of the thinking people who were never led by thought to suppose they could be more than human and who, in bad times, will not become less." Moral realism is aware of the paradoxical quirks of morality; it knows that good-and-evil are more often to be found than good vs. evil. Though dissatisfied, of course, with the

ways of men, it foresees no new virtues, but, at best, a healthier distribution of the old. It is non-eschatological, skeptical of proposed revisions of man's nature, interested in human beings as it finds them, content with the possibilities and limitations that are always with us. Dodging the sentimentality of both cynicism and utopianism, it is worldly, even sophisticated. It is partial to the comic manner, which dashes cold water on extremities of sentiment, and yet pursues doggedly its own modest goals. Forster's novels are in a personal, lucid style, omitting the glamorous facades of the tragic-romantic; he is always in the novel, skillfully at work, never hidden behind the screens manipulating invisible pulleys. Preoccupied with moral questions, he is neither overbearing nor sententious. Too sensible and ironic to be "great," he can afford to do his subject-matter justice.

If, as some think, ours is an "interregnum" period, then the Forster—Trilling perspective would seem natural and appropriate. It is a restrictive and somewhat alien focus, unwarmed by the expansive enthusiasm we have been accustomed to expending on matters of salvation. Summing up his political credo, Forster wrote: "So two cheers for Democracy; one because it admits variety, and two because it permits criticism. Two cheers are quite enough; there is no reason to give three. Only Love the Beloved Republic deserves that." (Which moved one left-wing critic to remark: "Two cheers for Forster.") And so it is with politics, reform, revolution, war, social planning: what were once unquestioned goods now call forth two well-modulated cheers. It may not always be so. Perhaps one bright morning nothing but three throaty yells will be able to express a new feeling of assured destiny; or perhaps, and this is more likely, we shall become sated with moderation, insist upon all or nothing at all, and then give three cheers for the hell of it. But, for the present, two will probably suffice.

All of which has some implication for radical political thinking, having to do with the scope of politics, its choice of goals, the sphere of its competence. Aldous Huxley has written that "political action is necessary and at the same time incapable of satisfying the needs which called it into existence." The socialist movement, allied with the recent sweep of collegiate psychology, contends that political action should satisfy these spiritual and psychological needs of the individual; more and more is the libertarian goal identified with a single ideal of personality divested of frustration and complexes. The development of a democratic-cooperative, rational, and sort of well-rounded person is assumed to reveal the purpose of the political struggle. "Moral realism" would incline toward Huxley here: the aim of political action is to change men's status, not their nature; though the two necessarily interact they do so outside of the objective intent of politics, and under the supervision of other forces. A reasonably ordered society can provide the most fertile testing ground for conflicting ideals of personality, since it will have eliminated irrelevant and distracting problems (such as the economic). But these worthwhile activities will spring from their mutual sources—the imaginative arts—not from commissarial decree. Certainly politics has a moral basis, but what does not—science, art, religion? Its distinctive feature is its subject matter, problems of statecraft, of the organization of existing forces and specified objectives into an effective union. In so doing, it must see people as they are, which, according to Messrs. Forster and Trilling, would not be at all in the nature of a calamity.

IRVING KRESTOL

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Recently I received some comments on Mr. Trilling's book from a friend of mine, now in the service. Some of them are reprinted below,

in the hope that they will center attention upon the dilemma to which the review was a tentative response.

"The clash between ethical idealism and moral realism is certainly genuine, but the Trilling-Forster emphasis seems to involve its own special brand of smugness. The knowledge of 'good-and-evil' necessitates a shift in attitude toward all those things we once unquestionably accepted, but it does not imply the same shift in attitude toward evil. A concern for ironic objectivity cannot imply two polite hisses for fascism, race hatred, etc. One cannot maintain a state of moral equilibrium in a world convulsed by hate, fear, and misery, without an abdication of moral responsibility.

".... I find myself thinking of Robert Penn Warren's *Night Rider* in this connection. Though his quiet irony and minor key seem akin to Forster, his insight is given tragic stature through the breadth of his symbols, the crucial character which he assigns to the struggle against evil. Forster prefers to shirk a frontal attack; he permits his moral probing to waver and blur in his desire to maintain the balance and decorum of his structure. By depriving his characters of stature, good and evil are kept in a minor key, irony remains pure, and tragic overtones are held to a minimum. Consequently he does not do justice to any of the problems he delicately raises—there is too much of an acceptance of their status as problems.

"Percy Munn puts the question pertinently in *Night Rider*: 'At what moment could a man trust his feelings, his convictions? At what point define the true and unmoved center of his being, the focus of his obligations?' I do not believe 'moral realism' is an adequate reply. At most it presents us with negative guideposts, never with a positive direction. A sense of individual dignity, an awareness of rampant injustice, an appreciation of the limits of collective action—these pose a thorny problem in realizing a satisfactory personal and social perspective. Perhaps it would be wiser to allow the problem to hang for the time being rather than attempt a resolution that would involve a serious loss, a retreat, an artificial locus."

H.

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